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INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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DEA HQS WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LA PAZ 2424

STATE FOR INM AND ARA, DEA FOR FRL, DIA FOR IR BRANCH, USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, BL
SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO GOB OPERATIONS AGAINST COCAINE FACTORIES AND COCA ERADICATION

1. SUMMARY: GOB OPERATIONS AGAINST COCAINE FACTORIES AND COCA ERADICATION RECEIVED WIDESPREAD AND GENERALLY FAVORABLE PRESS PLAY, BEGINNING ON SATURDAY, APRIL 24 AND CONTINUING THROUGH TUESDAY, APRIL 27. SOME ARTICLES QUESTIONING USE OF HERBICIDE DID APPEAR, BUT NARCOTICS COUNCIL ANSWERED QUESTIONS IN PRESS RELEASE. END OF SUMMARY.

2. COCA ERADICATION OEPRATIONS IN YAPACANI AND OPERATIONS AGAINST COCAINE FACTORIES BETWEEN THE CHAPARE AND YAPACANI RECIVED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE IN BOLIVIAN PRESS. FIRST ARTICLES APPREARED IN LA PAZ DAILIES "PRESENCIA" AND "HOY" ON SATURDAY, APRIL 24, REPORTING ON THE OPERATION AGAINST THE COCAINE FACTORIES. THE PRESENCIA ARTICLES NOTED THE INTEREST OF THE US EMBASSY IN THE OPERATION, STATING THAT A "HIGH FUNCTIONARY OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FLEW OVER THE OPERATONS AREA..." APRIL 23.

3. ON SUNDAY, ALL NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS CARRIED AT LEAST ONE ARTICLE, GENERALLY REPORTING THE OPERATION AGAINST THE FACTORIES IN A POSITIVE TONE, CHARACTERIZING IT AS "GIGANTIC", "SPECTACULAR", OR "VAST". THE ARTICLES WERE STRAIGHTFORWARD, REPORTING THE SEVERAL UNITS OF THE ARMED FORCES THAT WERE INVOLVED, THE NUMBER OF DETAINEES, FACTORIES DESTROYED, ETC. THE COCA ERADICATION WAS MENTIONED IN SOME ARTICLES ONLY IN PASSING. "HOY" CARRIED A TOTAL OF 6 ARTICLES RELATED TO THE OPERATIONS, BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH CAPTURED PORTERS OF COCA AND WITH FARMERS AND FARM LEADERS, AS WELL AS WITH THE COMMANDERS OF THE OPERATIONS. IN ONE ARTICLE, THE COMMANDERS OF THE OPERATION AGAINST THE FACTORIES WERE QUOTED AS ASSURING THAT THE OPERATION WAS NOT TARGETED AT FARMERSBUT RATHER AT THE NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS.

4. IN ANOTHER ARTICLE, "HOY" REPORTED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WORKING AS PORTERS OF COCA OR IN THE FACTORIES STOMPING ON COCA LEAVES WERE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS FROM THE CITIES. THE ARTICLE STATED THAT FROM 800 TO 1000 PORTERS A DAY CARRIED COCA ALONG THE TRAILS FROM THE EASTERN CHAPARE TO THE FACTORIES, EARNING 1,500 TO 2,000 PESOS FOR A 2-3 DAY TRIP. IT ALSO NOTED THAT MANY PEOPLE HAD DIED IN THIS ACTIVITY BECAUSE OF THE ROUGH CONDITION OF THE TRAILS, DROWNING, AND BITES BY POISONOUS ANIMALS. (A DOLLAR US EUALS APPROX. 75 PESOS).

5. "HOY" ALSO REPORTED THAT A FARM LEADER DENOUNCED THE MILITARY-FARMERS PACT AS BEING USELESS TO THE FARMERS OF THE CHAPARE. THE UNNAMED LEADER SAID THAT THE PACT WAS ONLY A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT TO GAIN THE FARMERS SUPPORT FOR WHATEVER REGIME WAS IN POWER, BUT THAT THE FARMERS RECEIVED NO BENEFITS. THE LEADER SAID THAT MANY OF THE FARMERS DID NOT EVEN KNOW THAT THE PACT EXISTED.

6. IN STILL ANOTHER ARTICLE, "HOY" REPORTED THAT TWO LOCAL WOMEN IN IVIRGARSAMA, A SMALL TOWN NEAR THE EDGE OF THE ZONE OF OPERATIONS, WERE RAPED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL. THE ARTICLE NOTED, HOWEVER, THE THE ACTS MAY HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY ELEMENTS WANTING TO TARNISH THE REPUTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION.

7. "EL MUNDO" OF SANTA CRUZ, ON APRIL 25, IN ONE ARTICLE ON THE OPERATIONS, QUOTED SAIC AMADEO MEDINA AS PRAISING THE GOB FOR ITS ACTION IN ERADICATING COCA AND SUGGESTING THAT THE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE COCAINE FACTORIES WOULD DRIVE UP THE PRICE OF COCAINE IN THE US.

8. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, "EL MUNDO" ON MONDAY, APRIL 26, CARRIED AN ARTICLE QUESTIONING THE USE OF HERBICIDES IN THE ERADICATION OF COCA. THE PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF SANTA CRUZ, DR. MANLIO ROCA, QUESTIONED WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS OF HERBICIDE USE ON ANIMAL LIFE, THE SOIL, OTHER CROPS AND, PRINCIPALLY, ON HUMANS IN THE AREA. IN THE ARTICLE, DR. ROCA CONFUSED THE HERBICIDE ACTUALLY BEING USED WITH PARAQUAT.
9. "PRESENCIA" ALSO CARRIED AN ARTICLE ON APRIL 26 CRITICIZING THE USE OF HERBICIDES, THIS TIME REPORTING THAT THE HERBICIDE BEING USED WAS 2,4 ST, WHICH THE ARTICLE SAID WAS AGENT ORANGE.

10. THE OPERATIONS CONTINUED TO GET COVERAGE ON APRIL 27. "HOY" REPORTED THAT THE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE FACTORIES AND TO ERADICATE COCA CONTINUED. IT ALSO REPORTED COMPLAINTS BY THE SPECIAL FEDERATION OF COLONISTS OF YAPACANI THAT THE MILITARY UNITS OPERATING IN THE AREA HAD COMMITTED A SERIES OF ABUSES (WITHOUT SPECIFYING
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THE TYPES OF ABUSES) DURING THEIR OPERATIONS, AND THAT A TOTAL OF 11 PEOPLE HAD DIED, INCLUDING PEOPLE WORKING IN THE COCAINE FACTORIES.

11. "HOY" ALSO CARRIED A PRESS RELEASE BY THE NARCOTICS COUNCIL CLARIGYING THAT THE HERBICIDE BEING USED IN YAPACANI IS 2-4, D, NOT AGENT ORANGE OR PARAQUAT, AND QUOTING DR. TSCHIRLEY (A SPECIALIST ON HERBICIDES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN WHO CONSULTED WITH THE NARCOTICS COUNCIL PRIOR TO THE OPERATION, FINANCED BY INM) AS SAYING THAT THE RESIDUAL EFFECT OF THE HERBICIDE ON THE SOIL WILL BE ONLY 4@@ WEEKS. THE RELEAST ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE COUNCIL HAD COMPLETED SOCIAL-ECONOMIC STUDIES ON WHICH IT WOULD BASE PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE THE INCOMES OF THE FARMERS IN THE YAPACANI AREA.
12. FINALLY, IN AN ARTICLE ON THE OPERATION AGAINST THE FACTORIES, "HOY" REPORTED THAT TO DATE OVER 200 FACTORIES HAD BEEN DESTROYED AND 100 PEOPLE ARRESTED.

13. "PRESENCIA" AND "EL DIARIO" (ALSO A LA PAZ DAILY) CARRIED SIMILAR ARTICLES ON TUESDAY. EL DIARIO NOTED ALSO THAT THE TYPE OF 2-4D BEING USED WAS OF LOW VOLATILITY, WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE RISK OF DAMAGE TO OTHER PLANTS OTHER THAN COCA.

14. "PRESENCIA" ALSO CARRIED AN ARTICLE CLAIMING THAT THE REPORTED VIOLATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE CHAPARE TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE TROOPS ARRIVED IN THE ZONE TO COMMENCE THE OPERATION AND ASSERTING THAT THE ACTS HAD BEEN COMMITTED IN ORDER TO DAMAGE THE REPUTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES.

15. COMMENT: IN GENERAL, THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ERADICATION OPERATION AND THE OPERATION AGAINST THE FACTORIES HAS BEEN FAVORABLE. THE NARCOTICS COUNCIL HAS ALSO DONE A GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS JOB. IT INVITED REPORTERS ALONG WITH THE TROOPS ENTERING THE OPERATION ZONE FROM THE CHAPARE,, THUS ASSURING EXTENSIVE COVERAGE. IT REACTED QUICKLY AND WITH SUBSTANTIATED DATA TO THE CHARGES ARISING THAT DANGEROUS HERBICIDES WERE BEING USED AND GOT POSITIVE REPORTING ON THIS ASPECT AS WELL. END COMMENT.
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